

you are here

the journal of creative geography

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the journal of creative geography

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In the you are here spring 1999 issue, Patricia Ranzoni's poem, "Catch Of The Day," should have read:

Down in Stonington Maine dawn
can't wait around for the sun,
Men and women work it in [not "in it"]
day after day after day.

The editors apologize for the error.

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the following

PLACES

appear
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of

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Map by: Patrick Barabie

Alabama, state, US	87.30	W	32.50	N
Alaska, state, US	150.00	W	64.00	N
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Europe	4.52	E	52.21	N
Bethlehem, GA	fictional			
Chiricahua National Monument, AZ	109.18	W	32.02	N
Cleveland, OH	81.42	W	41.30	N
Congo, nation, Africa	13.48	E	3.00	S
Connecticut, state, US	73.10	W	41.40	N
East Bumfuck	fictional			
Georgia, state, US	83.50	W	32.40	N
Gotham City	fictional			
Grace, Arizona	fictional			
Great Sand Dunes National Monument, CO	105.25	W	37.56	N
Greeley, CO	104.40	W	40.25	N
Greenland, dependency, N.A.	40.00	W	74.00	N
Grover's Corners	fictional			
Hanover, NH	72.15	W	43.45	N
Harpers Ferry, WV	77.45	W	39.20	N
Kentucky, state, US	87.35	W	37.30	N
Kenya, nation, Africa	36.53	E	1.00	N
Kilanga	fictional			
Kyoto, Japan, Asia	135.42	E	34.56	N
Lilliput	fictional			
Maine, state, US	69.50	W	45.25	N
Maryland, state, US	76.25	W	39.10	N
Massachusetts, state, US	72.30	W	42.20	N
Mt. Washington, MD	76.40	W	39.23	N
Nairobi, nation, Africa	36.49	E	1.17	S
Nevada, state, US	117.00	W	39.30	N
New Jersey, state, US	74.50	W	40.30	N
New York, state, US	78.05	W	42.45	N
New York City, NY, US	73.58	W	40.40	N
Nicaragua, nation, N.A.	86.15	W	12.45	N
Oklahoma, state, US	98.20	W	36.00	N
Paris, France, Europe	2.20	E	48.51	N
Pennsylvania, state, US	78.10	W	41.00	N
Pisa, Italy, Europe	10.24	E	43.52	N
Pittsburgh, PA	80.01	W	40.26	N
Tanzania, nation, Africa	33.58	E	6.48	S
Telluride, CO	107.50	W	37.55	N
Tucson, AZ	111.00	W	32.15	N
Verdun, France, Europe	5.21	E	49.09	N
Virginia, state, US	80.45	W	37.00	N
Wyoming, state, US	108.30	W	42.50	N

After his five month visit to Panama, Darryl came to my house bearing gifts from Central America. To me he presented a beaded, white bracelet containing orange circles with deep blue centers—symbols of sacred places.

"The symbols are representative of sacred places to the Kuni Indians in Panama's San Blas Islands. They might be places of origin or mysticism. Origin would include the birthplace of all frogs or hawks. Mystic places are holy places which cannot be found, let alone entered by ordinary people."

My bracelet has eleven sacred places. What are my own places of origin or mysticism? My eleven symbols might represent physical places with describable landscapes or mental places with emotional or spiritual meaning. Perhaps I could assign an address to my places, define a "here" or a "there" for my bracelet symbols. I might choose rural Georgia, my birthplace, for my place of origin. Perhaps I would locate my place of mysticism in the stars, the heavens, a mountaintop, a sunrise—or perhaps just a moment or a feeling of placefulness. My own experiences define how I understand, name, and relate to physical and mental places.

Which is why this issue of you are here, *the journal of creative geography*, exists. Because *place matters* and each person defines his or her sacred bracelet in a different way. So, too, do the contributors of this journal—the writers, artists, and academics who have taken time to express what place can mean.

In her cover photograph, Carolyn Grossl captures an expression of "I am HERE!" in the young boy. Perhaps the placefulness of the photograph is evoked by the short distance between the lens of the camera and the boy's face. Or instead the attitude behind the boy's expression could be interpreted to mean "I am exactly here at this moment." In addition, longer, more complex moments of place come through in pieces such as "Parable" by Nobel prize-winning poet Wislawa Szymborska.

Our relationship to our bracelet places can change. Tucson, Arizona, is my transient home, the place where I have a fleeting two years to work my mind, to explore the desert, to cultivate relationships with my fellow students. But suppose I choose to stay in Tucson, to raise a family and a garden, the path Barbara Kingsolver discusses with Kiri Eisele in "The Where and Why of Literature." Suppose I "dig in" and make this "here" a place altogether different from what it is now.

What about places we would *not* include in our sacred bracelet? Jeff Stein takes us through the pain of a tortured place and a divided

"here" in his "Pieces of Kenya—letters home." Ken Lamberton uses words to explore the world beyond his utterly defined space—prison.

So what are we humans doing in places? What are we doing *to* places? Jeri McAndrews chooses to combine her love of dance and movement with her love of big, natural places. She celebrates the rhythms of wind and the movement of mountains. Desiree Rios, on the other hand, captures human prints on the landscape. Five minutes ago or fifty years ago, humans imposed their needs and wants on landscapes throughout the American West and in Mexico. Stacey Halper, in *Empty Spaces*, offers a similar absence of humans yet emphasizes how humans arrange place. She does this on the "inside" however, taking us into the serene interiors of someone's very deliberate space. In the process of choosing what to include in an image and what to exclude, these artists present their own interpretations of place.

We have much to do with how our places are understood by others: we name them. Joel Lipman gives us Contra Diction, Sonny & LaVonne's, and marco beach. Duane Griffin tells us where we can find hell in the good ole US of A—or at least where our forebears have articulated hell to be.

Often times we use a map to describe location. Sandy Huss invites us over and gives a map to her house—so that we know where to go when we've stumbled across the church of the lightbulb cross or the tattoo parlor. She has given us markers so that we may come from anywhere and still arrive to a very specific "here."

But perhaps we disagree with the description of place that is given to us. What if the trail map we hold in our hands simply *lies* about the size of the stream we have to cross? Roger Sheffer offers us a journey through the interpretations and mental maps of hills and mountains, of "halfway there," "almost there," and "nowhere" in his essay on the mental geography of Appalachian Trail hikers. Each hiker has his or her own idea of defining, describing, and drawing the challenges of place on the AT.

Finally, Elaine Sexton offers us a glimpse at what her place bracelet might symbolize. In "The World Book" she reflects on the meaning of places she has experienced with her family in her childhood and in her adulthood.

With this Fall 1999 issue, you are here continues its quest to explore concepts of place. Because not everyone's sacred bracelet is the same.

Katherine Hankins
Tucson, AZ

Parable

Wislawa Szymborska

Some fishermen pulled a bottle from the deep. It held a piece of paper, with these words: "Somebody save me! I'm here. The ocean cast me on this desert island. I am standing on the shore waiting for help. Hurry! I'm here!"

"There's no date. I bet it's already too late anyway. It could have been floating for years," the first fisherman said.

"And he doesn't say where. It's not even clear which ocean," the second fisherman said.

"It's not too late, or too far. The island Here is everywhere," the third fisherman said.

They all felt awkward. No one spoke. That's how it goes with universal truths.

"Parable" from POEMS, NEW AND COLLECTED: 1957-1997 by Wislawa Szymborska, English translation by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh copyright © 1998 by Harcourt Brace & Company, reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Pieces of Kenya—Letters Home

Jeff P. Stein

December 20, 1992

In Nairobi we sweat thunderstorms. Demanding release, rivers crack our skin dams; while black and brown Kenyans dull under the sun, without a glisten breaking their foreheads. We all have skin for our homes.

Dear _____,

We fled Nairobi with Kenyan elections and tribal wars at our backs; the tribes haven't let up. On our way through Burnt Forest, hundreds of Kikuyus waded in the street, their homes still smoldering. With this tribal affliction, I could only vote for Jews and she could only vote for Catholics. Crossing the Tanzanian border January was green, acacias sticking out of mountains like stegosaurus plates. Newspapers reported another five years of Moi, the Kalenjin incumbent. The challengers—Matiba the Kikuyu, Odinga from the Luo, and the others—unified only in loss and 5 more years of tribes too old.

12/28

In a Naivasha mud-house we stare at a plaque: *"The disobeying wife is the beaten wife."* In perfect British, a Kikuyu *mzee* assumes we are married and still barren: *You sleep too much.* He argues for growing up with your children. I want to pull a condom from my backpack.

Continued

Each day she warns me of mugging in Rumuruti, backpacks in Nyaharuru sliced open. This morning she says the shillings jangling in her pants are invitations, and then she balances one in each silent pocket. When she returns home, we will jump from pockets, buzzing and clanking, jubilant coins.

1-1-93

The *Daily Nation* newspaper prints records of all traffic deaths. Stickers spawing across bus windows claim: 100 km/hr approaches God 120 is heaven 140 brings salvation. When your President is the 7th richest man in the world, your continent the poorest, and the British and the missionaries stole you years ago, every vehicle is chance, and every windshield proposes to God.

Layover, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

In 90 degree Jomo Kenyatta Airport, I stared at her, trying to smuggle a year and a half—the line between chest pains knowing we were months again apart; my legs dry a cracking fault.

Greeley, Colorado

After 4 weeks of Kenya and her, I'm trying to get used to neonwhite streetlights fastfoodshoosketchupdeodorantpersonalspace. At the library no one notices me standing in Kenya, steeped in oil-based Africa sprawled across the carpet. In a fading jet-lag, I aim for an armchair near Greenland, thinking of amputations' ghost pains, parts hunting for home-flesh. My feet haunted, my sleep in Swahili, my sex...hers.

At Night

I try to remember the journey. Have I made a dream of her; have I forgotten the map, where the ripest apples grow sweet. I have readied myself for the climb, falling back in autumn grass of tree leaf afternoons.

P.S.

This morning she calls from Nairobi. Always 9 hours ahead, she thins in her last months overseas. The doctor says eat, parafin is on ration, her wood stove has gone missing, the Kalenjin and Kikuyus kill each other faster, the bore hole full of more flies than water.

Penumbra

Jeri McAndrews

Here is a dance in celebration of Place: the Great Sand Dunes National Monument of southern Colorado, where the tallest dunes on the North American continent undulate. Their grains are captured by the surrounding mountains of the San Juans and the Sangre de Cristos. The dunes press against the west-facing slopes of the Sangres in the high basin San Luis Valley.

Linda Hocksema and I choreographed *Penumbra*, the second dance in an ongoing series of outdoor pieces designed to celebrate exceptional topographical features. Here we are moving into the landscape and finding "the sanctity of the land" as Joseph Campbell suggested.

I am a naturalist dancer. I started in New York City dancing in big boxes. I came West and noticed the geographical scenery was far more dramatic than any indoor stage. I went to the Hopi Snake Dance. *Why don't we dance on the crust like they do?* I wondered. Maybe if we danced in the wildest, most breathtaking places on earth, we'd bond to them better and wouldn't be so inclined to scrape-rape the land.

Dancers, musicians, poets, photographers, and other artists were invited from across the Southwest to dance and camp out with us for the summer Solstice of 1990. A free-form impromptu celebration of shadow and life manifested itself through motion and music. Dancers flowed across unmarked sand dune crests with brightly colored banners twirling about their bodies. In striking contrast to the muted shadow colors of the sand, the dancers and their streamers moved to spontaneous drum rhythms.

Whether there is adequate grant money or huge audiences, one thing is certain: Linda and I will heed the advice of Ed Abbey and "Keep dancing!" Our next outdoor dance is at the Chiricahua National Monument on the Spring Equinox 1999.



Photo by Anna Day Hiser



Photo by Anna Day Hiser

The Where and Why of Literature

A Conversation With Barbara Kingsolver

Kimi Eisele

Once I have the address, Barbara Kingsolver's house is not difficult to find. Located amidst a tangle of desert just beyond the city limits of Tucson, the driveway is well marked and the house at its end just as I have pictured it. Still, after my arrival, Kingsolver delays our conversation enough to show me exactly where I am.

She leads me through a small garden, one she tends herself, then up a set of brick stairs to the roof. From there, she is quick to point out that the house, half underground, "straddles two habitats." Facing south, we look out over a stretch of creosote, prickly pear, cholla, and saguaro cactus—the quintessential Sonoran Desert landscape. To the north an expanse of dense mesquite forest and a stripe of cottonwood trees along a nearby wash afford a view of riparian habitat most desert-dwellers (human and animal alike) revere.

It seems fitting that someone who considers herself a "geographically divided soul" would live here, in this house, in this location. But the impression I am left with after our conversation one spring afternoon is

that both the writer and her work are resolutely grounded in place.

Once we settle into a visiting room on the west side of the house, she confirms this. "I think of story as something that comes out of geography. If you think back in time to the origins of storytelling, it was surely always about 'Where are we? Why are we here and not there? Where is the water? Where is the food? Where do we find our courage for the hunt?' Story is a way of establishing ourselves in place, and of passing on information that we've acquired about a place to the next generation."

Since she left her home in the deciduous woodlands of Kentucky some two decades ago, Kingsolver has dedicated much of her life and work to establishing

herself in the place where she now lives. Until recently, most of her books and novels were set in the American Southwest, a fact that early on earned her the label of "southwestern writer."

Unflinchingly, however, Kingsolver claims that most of what she knows about the world came from her first home in Appalachia, even though it took half of her life for her to realize it. "When I was growing up there, I couldn't wait to get out of it. It's very hard to appreciate a rural community when you're growing up there. I always say that the bad thing about living in a small town is 'Everybody knows your business,' and the good thing about living in a small town is 'Everybody knows your business.'"

Now as an adult and a mother of two, the author says she has missed living in that kind of a community. "I look at it as this enormous rupture in my life that I ended up 2,000 miles from the people that knew me before I had teeth."

Recognizing the move away from home as common among people of her generation, she calls it a "weird dislocation" and blames it for what she sees as a general sense of apathy among modern Americans. "It has a peculiar affect, I think, on the human psyche. It's normal in our culture, but in greater human terms, it's abnormal. The fact that we close ourselves off from our neighbors and don't invest ourselves emotionally in local issues I think is the result of this."

While she is quick to blame societal apathy on the phenomenon of re-location, she has done her best not to let her own geographical shift debilitate her sense of

place. "I am someone who gets embedded in a place," she says. "Wherever I am, I dig in."

Consider, for starters, *where* she writes.

Because it is underground, her house has limited views and few windows. When she moved in, she picked for her office the room with the best view, a corner that lets her witness what goes on outside. "My window opens into this little clearing in the woods, and when I look out that window, I can't see anything made by humans. I just see the riparian woodland and the creatures that pass through it. I see amazing things."

She relates the story of a bobcat that came right up to the window and looked in, either at her or its own reflection. "Bobcats are very catty," she says, and in her explanation, I hear the witty kind of speak I have heard before in her characters. "They have this curiosity that reputedly kills them, but they look into windows."

Another time she watched two large rattlesnakes entwined in a graceful wrestle. She called in her husband, her two daughters, and her assistant, and all of them sat mesmerized as the scene unfolded. She called up a friend, a herpetologist, to learn that what they were witnessing was a common behavior between some male snakes used to win the attention of a nearby female.

Details like these are important. They reveal the nature of a place and those who inhabit it. If anything, her window to the world serves as a reminder of the important, if uncomfortable, questions she asked herself when she arrived in Tucson: "What does it mean for a human to live in the desert? What are the pressures we put on this place? What are the things we steal from it?"

What are the things we really destroy?" Now, because of where she lives, she sees the contradictions, the wearing thin of boundaries between humans and nature, every time she steps outside and every time she sits down to write.

Despite these dilemmas, Kingsolver does not hole herself up in her room. Rather, she attaches herself just as tightly to the social issues of her community. And for someone "infinitely interested in what happens when cultures rub up against each other and the sparks that fly from that," Tucson is "a very compelling place to be."

When she first arrived, Kingsolver says she was particularly affected by the results of U.S. foreign policy in Central America, which brought floods of refugees northward fleeing civil war and violence that plagued their home countries. "Here they were in my living room telling me the stories of what my government had done to their homeland. This was an education that changed my life."

The author addresses the plight of refugees in her first novel, *The Bean Trees*, the story of a plucky woman who leaves her home in Kentucky, inherits an orphaned Cherokee baby in Oklahoma, and ends up in Tucson, an important locus for the Sanctuary movement to protect Central American exiles.

Since then, the bulk of Kingsolver's writing has related stories of voluntary and involuntary migration. In her second novel, *Animal Dreams*, the protagonists, two sisters, make important journeys: one travels home to the fictional town of Grace, Arizona, the other to Nicaragua to support the Sandinista government. In

High Tide in Tucson, a collection of essays, Kingsolver reflects on living in, leaving, and returning to the desert. As a whole, the volume reveals her love of home and her continuous desire to make home better—the latter representing a commitment that creeps up in almost all of her work, no matter how big her definition of home is; it's a commitment she isn't likely to ever abandon. "Probably if there's one thing that I write about again and again it is community—what defines it and how we belong and don't belong."

Still, Kingsolver sees her location and its penetration into her art as somewhat arbitrary, her label as a "southwestern writer" simply the product of paying close attention to where she is. "If I had plunked myself down in Alabama, let's say, I probably would have written more about civil rights; and if it had been Alaska, I would have written about the Inuit. But I'm here, so this is what I came to be."

Though her passion for the local is evident, in her most recent novel, *The Poisonwood Bible*, Kingsolver leaves the comforts and familiarity of home and extends her range across the globe to the African Congo. Perhaps more than any of her previous work, this novel testifies to her ability to dig into the complex range of issues that collectively constitute "somewhere."

In the novel, Kingsolver re-locates a southern woman and her four daughters from Bethlehem, Georgia to the Belgian Congo at the command of Nathan Price, husband, father, minister, and tyrant. The author cleverly weaves together the individual experiences and perceptions of the novel's

narrators—the five women of the family—and uses their stories to illuminate the political events that unfolded in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the years in which the Congo won its independence.

As with her other books, Kingsolver does not try to camouflage the political lessons of the story. Rather, she is earnest in her approach and commitment to addressing injustice. Aside from telling the tale of a family of Southern Baptists who travel to a foreign land, she says she was committed to shedding light on the U.S. involvement in the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and its subsequent support in the rise of the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Reviewers have called *The Poisonwood Bible* "an old-fashioned 19th-century novel, a Hawthornian tale of sin and redemption" and likened aspects of its story and characters to those of Melville and Conrad. Others have called it "learned, tragicomic, and sprawling." What resonates, however, is the theme that has become emblematic of her work—the loss and discovery of community.

From the time they arrive in the fictional village of Kilanga, the five women of the Price family reveal what happens to them as a new and different place challenges the lives they have always known. On many levels, it is the story of how complicated the consequences of shifts in geography can be on things like politics, physical landscapes, and human emotions.

Though Kingsolver skillfully uses geography to illustrate how a particular experience takes hold of her characters' lives, she does not tend to think of setting as

a character in and of itself. But "In *The Poisonwood Bible*," she concedes, "the setting becomes sort of an epic character, more of a monster than a character—it's very large and it swallows people."

Kingsolver says she uses setting mostly as the stage upon which her characters can act. She describes her writing process as one that begins first with a theme. With *The Poisonwood Bible*, "the theme happened to be very tied up with geography because the theme I wanted to explore was, to put it in very large and blunt terms, 'What is it that the west did to Africa and why did it fail.'"

"I am someone who gets embedded in a place," she says. "Wherever I am, I dig in."

When I mention the unfortunate universality of that theme, she nods and begins to tell me that because of the difficulty posed by the dangerous political situation in the Congo at the time, friends suggested that she set the story in Latin America, a place she knows well. "I thought about it and thought about it, but that wasn't the story that I wanted to tell. It partly had to do with the way Latin America was colonized, and the time, and the issue of slavery. For about four or five very large reasons, this story couldn't be set there, it had to be set in the Congo."

Primarily a fiction writer, Kingsolver has suggested (in well-crafted essays) that the trick of fiction lies in creating believable geographies and plausible characters. She has written that, "fiction works, if it does, only when the readers believe every word of it. Grover's Corners is *Our Town*, and so is Cannery Row, and Lilliput, and Gotham City, and Winesburg, Ohio, and the dreadful metropolis of *1984*." In a list of "Ten Basic Rules for Writing Fiction," Kingsolver hints that one of the ways to do this is to "Use details from every sense you own." Another is to "Set your scenes in places you know well."

In researching *The Poisonwood Bible*, it's apparent that Kingsolver has heeded her own advice. What is most amazing, however, is how vividly she evokes the landscape of the Congo without having visited it during the time she was working on the novel. "I was incredibly frustrated because I couldn't have chosen a more difficult place. I couldn't go there. Mobutu was shooting people like me who tried to go there, and that's not an exaggeration. I mean he wasn't doing it personally but he had hired quite a lot of people who were doing it very efficiently, in the airport upon arrival."

So, to write the novel, Kingsolver got as close to the Congo as she could. In other African countries she visited Peace Corps volunteers in small villages, struck up conversations with African university students and housewives ("They told me things that permanently changed my worldview, just shifted everything a little bit."), and always, always volunteered to cook. "I think that's one of

the best ways of learning about a place . . . I would take my handful of coins, go down to the market, look at what there was, bargain, and face the very daunting task of coming home from an African village market with at least two and hopefully three food groups."

She also took careful notes, "writing down what the rain smells like, what's blooming . . . what sort of materials are involved in constructing a vehicle," and read "hundreds of books. Everything from careful scholarly accounts of things like the formation and dissolution of political parties during Mobutu's reign to self-published memoirs by missionaries who were there at the time I was writing about." Laughing, Kingsolver says the amount of research she did could have earned her a dissertation.

As our conversation bounces from the personal to the professional to the geographical to the historical, it becomes clear that Kingsolver is not shy about her political agendas. If anything, she is emphatic about addressing issues of community and social justice in her life and work. When she moves briefly into a discussion about raising her two daughters to be conscious, responsible, and active members of society, I sense she is a woman who practices what she preaches.

But if Kingsolver seems dedicated in her engagement with the sticky issues of human rights, injustice, racism, and activism, she's tired of being part of an "endangered species" of artists committed to reflecting those issues in their work. To counter this, she recently made a move toward "defining a literature of social change" by endowing the Bellwether Prize for Fiction, a \$25,000 award for the author of an unpublished

novel that addresses contemporary or historical issues in a way that advocates social responsibility.

"If you want to make the world better, one place to begin is by validating and encouraging the kind of literature that causes people to question and empowers people to work for change and to deconstruct the mythologies that hold society in its weirdest and worst ways. And to reconstruct ideologies—that's what writers can do, that's what novelists can do."

When I point out that "social change" is a huge term, she is quick to agree. She gets up and rummages through a file at her assistant's desk, then returns with a list of works that fit into her definition. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *Bastard Out of Carolina* by Dorothy Allison, and *Cloudsplitter* by Russell Banks, among others, are works she says have addressed issues of past or present political or social injustice.

Kingsolver worries about the hold of what she calls the "New York literary establishment" on new American literature. "We can sophisticate ourselves right out of existence if we don't watch out." Concerned about what she sees as a growing schism between art and politics, she hopes the prize will redirect what has become a "disastrous course for literature" by lauding writers brave enough to address complicated issues that most people are afraid to talk about.

"I feel badly for the many writers I would call political writers who are quick to say, 'Oh I'm not a political writer.' We shouldn't be ashamed, we should be proud of this. This is one of the best things we can do. There's nothing inherently bad about political art. Bad art is bad

art. Good art is good. And it can take on anything it's smart enough to carry."

As our conversation winds down, I start to feel convinced that Kingsolver the novelist is smart enough to carry an awful lot. Perhaps because Kingsolver the mother and activist are there to share the burden. What strikes me most about her ideologies is how blurred their boundaries are—her convictions about responsibility weigh out equally in all arenas of her life.

"My work is not very separate from my family life, from my community activism. I've never been able to sort those things out into compartments. And I'm glad of that. I think most people have to spend their lives doing work that doesn't especially inspire them intellectually or morally, and then they go home and do their family work and their community work and whatever's left. I feel incredibly lucky to get to do for a living basically what I would do without pay."

Even in the tasks that don't earn her a salary, Kingsolver finds purpose. She sees everyday responsibilities—doing her own laundry and growing a garden, for example—as important activities that "nail me as a human to my place, to my community, and keep me aware of the processes involved."

But these are private duties, things she does for herself and her family. What she does for the rest of society, she does in her writing, something she plans to continue for a long time. "As my grandmother always said, 'If a tree don't fall on me, I'll just keep writing novels 'til I die.'"

Lucky for her fans, trees aren't so big, or too common, in the desert. ♦

From the Cellblock

A Compilation of Ken Lamberton's Words

edited by Jen McCormack

Place can liberate or constrain a writer—but it is never ineffectual to the muse. Be it the urban music of Langston Hughes or the driving beat of Jack Kerouac, locale directs the pen. Those big city sounds and wide open roads allow the writer to scribble wild. But what of the exiled writer? Writers like Joyce and Dickinson retreated to places of solace, confining the body to unleash the mind. And then there are those writers whose exile is involuntary. Even mandatory. Those who write a jail sentence.

A former high school science teacher, Ken Lamberton is currently finishing a twelve year sentence in the Arizona State Prison. Now living behind bars, he is teaching biology to his fellow prisoners and writing creatively. Observing the desert seasons from his cell, Lamberton analogizes that austere life cycle to his own. This piece is a compilation of excerpts from Lamberton's latest essay, "Desert Time" (DT) and extracts from his interview with you are here (IN). The interview was conducted via post.

From the prison yard, Lamberton observes the first winter winds in the southern Arizona desert. "Summer is gone in one day. Overhead, a dark cloud

span seals off the sky in one solid, unmoving mass. A cold, gritty wind slaps against me as I walk my laps, an exercise of obsession that keeps me cutting a visible path near the perimeter fence the way a dog traces the borders of its pen. For one half of my circuit I push into the wind's dry and icy hands; for the other half the same hands push me along. Shove and be shoved. Charge and retreat. Around and around. The wind is a sadistic cop, a sadistic prison system. I complete four laps and I've had enough. There's a deep throbbing ache in my inner ears where the cold has penetrated from my exposed lobes by convection. My ear lobes might as well be made of aluminum for all their insulating properties.

"Yesterday I sweated under these same laps under a bright metallic blister that drove temperatures into the eighties. As the cold front elbowed its way into the southwest, temperatures fell 40 degrees in less than 24 hours. It's not uncommon. Weather extremes do occur here. At certain times of the year it's expected.

"I've decided that if you intend to live in the desert you'll need the physiology of a reptile. Desert rats, with apologies to the late Edward Abbey (the quintessential desert rat), can't hack it. Pack rats, in fact, are wimps.

Furry, goggle-eyed, thin-blooded wimps. To survive here they must construct elaborate nests of refuse to protect themselves from our region's climate. They retreat into their snug middens with every pulse of the mercury, just when the desert starts to demand attention.

"Reptiles, on the other hand, adapt." (DT)

Ken Lamberton's own adaptation was not as innate as that of the reptile. He admits, "*I was raised in the desert with heat and thirst and thorn. But it wasn't until I came to prison that I understood how a difficult environment can enhance life or make it bitter. The desert of my childhood gave me insight into how I might survive, even thrive in prison, and this was the direction I chose. I had models to follow. The ocotillo taught me about acceptance in its rain-readiness and patience; the mesquite, persistence in its range-crowding. The saguaro taught me how to produce fruit in drought, how to give something back.*" (IN)

More than a benign teacher, the saguaro is an element of verve. "I like to say that I also admire the saguaro. I smile at the way its slender columns stand erect like fingers poised in an obscene gesture. Our signature cactus. I say I appreciate it for its arrogance; it is a symbol of defiance in a hostile country. I suppose I attribute this attitude to the saguaro because I want to, because I can identify with it. But all gestures aside, the saguaro isn't some rebellious prisoner held against its will in some twisted environment. The saguaro accepts the desert for what it is, on its terms." (DT)

As an imprisoned writer, Ken has accepted the attitude of the saguaro, but not easily. He recognizes the glaring difference between his own confinement and those writers who voluntarily retreat. "*There's one obvious advantage to the 'self-induced prison' of the writer: You can leave it whenever you want. That's not an option for me. I guess the difference is that I don't create the isolation and solitude to write, I use it. I take advantage of prison, bending its grimness to my will, if nothing else, even if that means surrendering.*" (IN)

Winter assumes a unique form in the desert. Ken notes the dualism within nature and the bizarre relativity of time. "January's few weeks of winter are an extension of fall. Pacific fronts continue to bring rain and, occasionally, snow. But alternate days are just as likely to be sunny and mild. Our only mesquite tree is bare, a fretwork of blackened and arthritic fingers reaching in the only direction to escape this confinement-upward. Cacti and paloverde still benefit from sunlight that drenches their evergreen branches. Creosote might even flower. It is an uncertain time. A sudden storm could bring frost or snow, or a few days of sun may feel like spring. But the desert's unpredictable nature isn't difficult if we're flexible, if we adjust to it. We might even begin to accept it.

"I can. It's true that prison's gravity has punched a hole in the three-dimensional space of my life, narrowing it down to a single point, muddling my past, my future. That without distance I can't measure time. That I live in a kind of endless present. But here, in those quiet moments when the prison system is not too much of a distraction, when I'm not buffeted by meaningless or sadistic rules, I find clarity." (DT)

How can there be clarity in a system of limited space and movement? "*I think writing from prison is a work of consciousness narrowed down to a point. The confinement helps me gather my thoughts and opinions about both the mundane and the significant and sometimes makes connections between the two—what the poet Charles Simic called 'Those rare moments of clarity.' Prison reveals all the wonderful fragmentations of my mind. Art in the mosaic. Here, I'm shaken, whipped, then centrifuged. If something profound emerges I write it down. In my cell with pen and paper, I dredge up words from deep within me, words about a life connected by fences and razor wire.*" (IN) ♦

The essay "Desert Time" is part of Ken Lamberton's forthcoming book, *Fences and Razor Wire*, printed by Mercury House.



OUTSIDE

La Ultima Barreda, Vacía

Desiree Rios





Three Poems

Joel Lipman

marco beach

"oi veh, too cold,"
he said it, not me

but I
might yet

THE RETREAT

I call my lot Contra Diction,
but it might have any name.

Suspended along the river, lights
strung like a drowsy carnival marquee
about to rise from the trailertops,
Sonny and LaVonne call their retreat
Sonny & LaVonne's.

Check the nameplate.

CLEVELAND: THE FLATS

THIS saxophone
talking steel works & train ruins, someone says something
like "Joe has another ham...." one, two, three, go—the bass
eats catfish, smiles, a drummer stings his rims

CHEESE sandwiches
old gray slacks & gritty neon, rubber, R&B exhaust, 4 guys
actually walk in the front door. 6 couples dancing cha-
-lypso, my lady's crosstown walk, a row of waitresses

CONCRETE drunk
east side tonk, her head where the steel door'll smack,
split it shitfaced & her boyfriend gestures a finger, "you
goin' that way?" Band inside boogying

TALKING about
huh! all ain't nothin'b drums & James Brown steppin' jive
squawk & alley elbows, noise & sass piped fulla sex. Um...,
this guy lounging on a lawn chair in the dark

ELSEWHERE downtown
this barmaid picks up the phone, repeats "...a guy with a mus-
-tache?" Looks around. A man quietly talks to my friend, who
answers with "...the instructions..."

Hell

Duane Griffin

A few years ago, somebody hired me to write some software for querying the USGS Geographic Names Information System database and mapping the results. The GNIS database includes every place name that appears on any USGS topographic map. While I was testing it, I decided to see where Hell is. This map is the result. It shows the locations of all places in the 48 contiguous states with names that begin with "Hell."

Several patterns are notable. Hell is especially well-represented in mountains and coastlines. Hell is more common in the West than in the East, and is notably rare in the central plains. The surfeit of Hell in the northern Great Plains is as curious as the surplus surrounding the Colorado Plateau. Nevada is strangely Hell-less, and note how the Wyoming border seems to mark out a Hell-free zone, except for the northeastern quarter of the state.

Most types of geographic features have been names "Hell's..." somewhere. There are Hell's Meadows, Mesas, and Mountains; Hell Points, Peaks, and Passes; Hell's Hills, Gaps, and Draws. Countless Hell's Canyons, Creeks, and Hollows drain the uplands (a lot

of creeks and canyons are Hellroarin') to water features like Hell Bottom Swam, Hell's Well, Hell Bays, Hell's Crossing, Hell Swamp, Hell Hook Marsh, and Hell's Island.

There's one Hell's Acres and one Hell's Acre, but there are Hell's Half Acres all over the place. There are also a lot of Hell's Kitchens, but only one Hell's Delight. There's Hell to Find and Hell to Get To, Hell for Certain, Hell to Finish, Hell for Slim, Hell for Sure, and Hell's Half Mile. There's Hellzapoppin Canyon, Hell's Hip Pocket, Hell's Uncle, Hell and Purgatory, Hell Fire Flat, and Hell'n Moriah Canyon. There's Hell's Neck and Hell's Backbone, Hell's Bellows, Hell's Trap Shoot. There are, of course, Hell'er High Water, Hell's Bells,

and Hell[s] Hole, which is almost ubiquitous as Hell's Gate. There's a Helltown and the obliquely direct Hell's Here, as well one place named The Hell (as in "What...?"). There are only two places named simply "Hell:" Hell, Michigan, and Hell, California. I've never been to either, but I bet they're good places to buy T-shirts and postcards.

churches and cemeteries. There are, however, 618 entries that begin with "Paradise," with its more earthly overtones. Still, the eternal battle of good versus evil that lies at the heart of western Christianity is well reflected in the place-name geography of the United States, and it's clear which side the settlers and explorers thought was winning. For an accurate count, it would



Where there's a pattern, there must be a process. America's dystopic toponymy has something to tell us about westerling Europeans' reactions to landscapes they encountered and the places they helped create through the act of naming. There are about 500 entries in the GNIS database that begin with "Hell" or "Hell's," but only forty-seven begin with "Heaven," excluding

be necessary to weed out all of the multiple entries for single features that appear on different maps (streams, for instance, are represented in the counts in proportion to their lengths). But on a raw-count basis, excluding churches and cemeteries, the Prince of Darkness rules. The score: "Devil/s" 1518; "God/s" 20. But that's another map. ♦

Empty Spaces

Stacey Halper



Imaginary Profiles The Mental Geography of AT Hikers

Roger Sheffer

The Appalachian Trail runs more than 2000 miles from start to finish, all of it mapped at a scale of an inch to the mile or better, with contour lines and vertical profiles detailing every up and down. A complete set of official maps exists for every section. Carrying all those maps from Georgia to Maine would add at least another pound to the hikers' pack weight and increase not only the physical burden of hiking, but also the mental burden, to which, it seems, the body is often more sensitive. And so the long-distance hikers often rely on other maps—not for detailed directions—but for a sense of what they are doing, of *where they are* along this almost incomprehensible continuum.

The vertical profile that accompanies every official AT

map can be misleading, as it always distorts the vertical with respect to horizontal. On Pennsylvania maps the vertical exaggeration is 13.2, sometimes making Matterhorns out of minor hills. For the rest of the AT states, it is 5.28 and the profile along the edge of the map can seem fairly realistic: the outline of Vermont's 4000-foot Killington Peak, for example (figure 1), presents that mountain approximately as

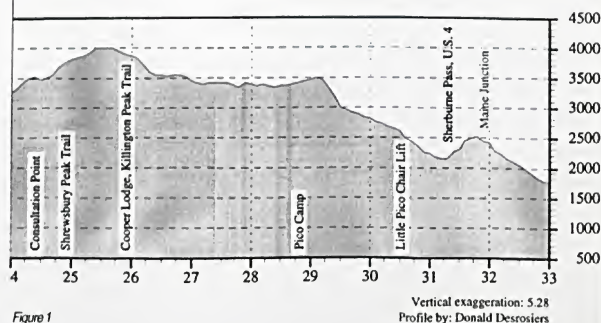


Figure 1

Vertical exaggeration: 5.28
Profile by: Donald Desrosiers

we might "see" it along the horizon, and, especially, the steepness that we feel in our boots and back, descending from the summit to U.S. Route 4—the point at which we thumb a ride or flag down a bus, if the hike is going badly. Valleys, too, need enhancement. Only with a 5.28 exaggeration does the gorge at Vt. 103, which the AT crosses on a highway bridge, begin to resemble a gorge.

Map-less, the weary hiker signs in for the night at the next shelter, and there, in the register notebook, he or she may find unconventional representations of the trailscape—some useful, some entertaining. The caretaker of the shelter has drawn a map to the nearest water source, detailed down to the last fencepost, with apologies in case the spring has run dry. A knowledgeable "local" has scribbled a relocation for the next ten miles, a necessary bypass not mentioned in the guidebook. An anonymous artist has provided an illustrated map of "the trail between here and Route 309," making it easier to take, perhaps, by turning various features of the landscape into familiar household objects: Bake Oven Knob becomes an four-burner stove with its oven door open, Bayer's Rocks are three big aspirin tablets set side by side, and, of course, the Knife Edge is a knife edge. A thin green line, marked AT, threads its way through these illustrated landmarks from south to north. The thru-hikers have all signed in with comments and itineraries and restaurant recommendations and customized "signatures" or "logos" incorporating their new trail identities and,

perhaps, a part of the abstract map that has stamped itself on the collective hiking mind.

Richard Bailey, a frequent distance hiker on the Appalachian Trail (trail name, "The Old Fhart"), has recently upgraded his logo. He has created an address-label-size sticker that he places in the register of every shelter he visits on his way north from



Figure 2

Georgia to Maine (figure 2). Bailey's logo is an extreme reduction of the vertical profiles of all fourteen states thrown together, marking only the most important peaks, like Springer Mtn. and Katahdin, with a vertical exaggeration factor of 413.6, resulting in a profile that looks something like the spiky record of a volatile stock market or an erratic EKG. The address portion of the sticker blocks out the more forgettable ups and downs of relatively flat Maryland and Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Bailey's logo is clever and precise, too much trouble to hand-draw every time he signs in. He tells me he printed out several sheets of stickers to take on his 2000-mile hike, and had a few left over when he finished. Other hikers draw their profiles free-hand; in their design, they may respond to the idea of the entire hike or merely the experiences of one day. They may offer their profile map as a description of

what they've just experienced, as "Van Go" does in his almost-vertical descent into the Pennsylvania town of Port Clinton (figure 3); or as a premonition

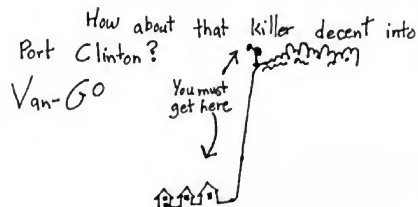


Figure 3

of what is to come, a reality-check, as "Pixie" does in her profile map (figure 4) from Dick's Dome shelter in Northern Virginia, looking north towards Harpers Ferry. The seventeen identical hills of Pixie's Profile Map are, no doubt, out of scale with respect to the four ant-like hikers who clamber up and down them; for, in these mental maps of the trail, it is never possible to show the true size of the mountain, physically or psychologically, in relation to the person who labors upon its slopes, wearing busted boots and ragged clothes, hauling a forty-pound pack.

The simplest example I can describe here was drawn by someone named "Bilbo," a wavy line arrow that may be both vertical and horizontal. It connects not the terminal states—Georgia and Maine—as much as two terminal human figures. Pictured at the beginning, to the left of "GA," is a puffy, Michelin-man-like person; at the end, beyond "ME,"

a stick figure whose upraised arms celebrate, perhaps, the victory of weight loss. This logo was found in a Pennsylvania shelter near the midway point of the completed hike, so it may represent wishful thinking more than the wisdom of experience. Another profile from a Pennsylvania shelter is more clever, and sadly deluded. "Bull Moose" has drawn a moose logo, of course (figure 5), and used moose antlers to display two vertical profiles. The antler on the left, representing Georgia to Pennsylvania, is quite jagged; the one on the right, Pennsylvania to Mt. Katahdin, is much less jagged, as if this hiker believes things will get easier. They won't. New England is

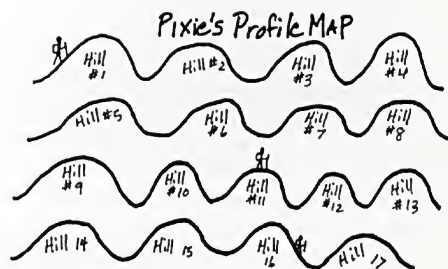


Figure 4

certainly as difficult as the South, perhaps more difficult, as it features less ridge-hiking, more base to summit ascents. That some thru-hikers combine GA and ME into one word when they sign the register may say something about the space between those



Figure 5

two locations—that, in the minds of certain AT hikers, the 2000-mile space is already gone, because they have willed it to be, and the two abbreviations now form the word GAME, which is what this hike may very well have become. Note this "dialogue" among several hikers in the Windsor Furnace shelter in Pennsylvania:

7-8-85 I came here to find myself. Instead, I found Windsor Furnace turquoise.
Red Man

7-8-85 Go Slow Go Far — maybe we're waiting for ourselves at the Pinnacle [PA landmark]? We been looking for over a 1,000 miles. Hey Drifters! Have you found yourselves? So, where are you? Wherever you are, there you are. GA-ME! (there I am!)
Jenny and Katy from CA.

7-9-85 Have I found myself? After the last five days, I'm not only wondering where I am, but who I am. I'm here, but where is here? I want to get to there, but I was told I can't get there from here. I suppose it doesn't matter, because how can I be in two places at once, when I'm actually nowhere at all. So there.

Drifting Jimmy

7-9-85 We're on our way to everywhere... Today I'm Pokey, but I've been Yogi, Kaz....slowly up that ridge, over those rocks. Know thyself.

The hikers are all caught in the "long green tunnel," an endless trail without many open views or signs of real progress, a trail that often follows a convoluted track so as to avoid the towns and cities that would have given these people a better sense of where they were.

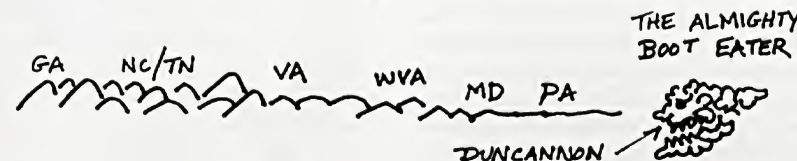


Figure 6

The rocks have destroyed their boots and their backs. They have passed through the Duncannon

ing on the same steep angle beyond the summit of the mountain and into the sky. In another, the discor-

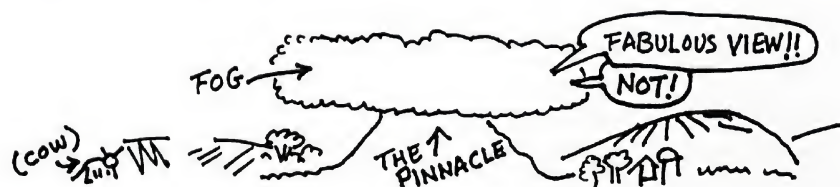


Figure 7

monster, evidently the worst stretch of rocks on the entire trail, which in the imagination of one hiker takes the form of a grotesque rock-head, larger than any mountain (figure 6). And when they reach the famous Pinnacle, there's no reward. The overlook is socked in with fog (figure 7).

For decades the White Mountains in New Hampshire have engaged the imagination of both thru-hikers and day-hikers. A page from the 1924 Carter Notch Hut register is like a work of primitive art, ten absurdly steep mountains shown in sequence, with stick-figure hikers struggling up and tumbling down the slopes. The Peabody River, between Mt. Washington and Mt. Jefferson, has its own "peaks," stylized waves to indicate the struggle of crossing them. One hiker appears to be standing on his head between two crests of water, as if he tumbled and landed there. The steepness of the mountains is a kind of joke—in one example of register art from the 1940s, a group of hikers, having lost sight of their leader, continue hik-

dance between guidebook language, "ascends steeply," and the true experience of hiking is graphically presented (figure 8).

Aerial views: on August 29th, 1998 a hiker checked in at the Telephone Pioneers Shelter in New York State, about ten miles "south of" the Connecticut

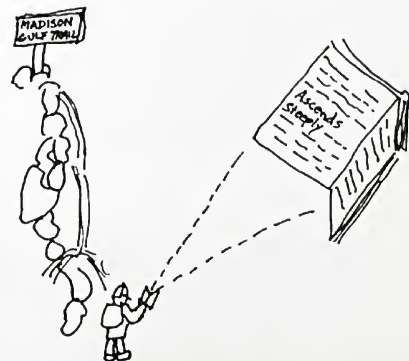


Figure 8

border. Perched on the slope of a gentle ridge, this shelter is a great place to sit and think, to contemplate the view into a valley of almost Lake-District beauty. This hiker was southbound—although, to look at his map in the register, showing his loopy version of how the trail twists and turns on its way from Kent, Connecticut, to this shelter, it is impossible to tell north from south. And so, the winding track reflects the psychological reality of hiking those miles, offered in warning to northbounders.

The complete hike from Georgia to Maine (the usual direction) can be even more indirect, involving gaps, reversals, backing and filling. A northbounder may go off the trail at some intermediate point, get picked up by friends and dropped off at the northern terminus and then begin to hike south, to cover the sections missed. This is called flip-flopping, which is the way I interpret Jimmy 1-Note's diagram (figure 9)—that he plans to skip a few states and make them up later. That he plans to "reappear" a couple weeks later in Hanover, NH, is part of that dream-image thru-hikers sometimes develop, a sense of magical abilities that may help to transcend the landscape. One hiker in the Smokies (another "Pixie") claims to have discovered a shortcut: "Did you know that part of the trail from Little Laurel Shelter to here is really a wormhole that connects you to the trail in Georgia? It really is! I swear." *Wormhole* seems the perfect metaphor, as it suggests dimensions of space-travel. The trail *feels* so long that the only reasonable way to get from here to there is by magically skipping most of it.

The most complex itinerary diagram I've ever seen is not a map, really, but a life history (past, present, and future) imposed upon a chain of states, all fourteen listed in order, with various truths and fantasies attached to the appropriate state abbreviation (figure 10). The hiker loses his girlfriend in Virginia, visits a

7-21-98

Jimmy 1note

GA - VA - NH - ME - MA - CT / Kat

1 note has a plan to be off for 2 weeks and to reappear at Hanover NH

Figure 9

prostitute in New York, where he is arrested—as if the Trail would take him directly through New York City, when in fact it passes some fifty miles north of there. In Connecticut, he "resorts to flip-flops." This is not in the specialized sense of hiking the trail out of sequence, but in the sense of having ruined his third pair of boots and adopting flipflops as his footgear—none

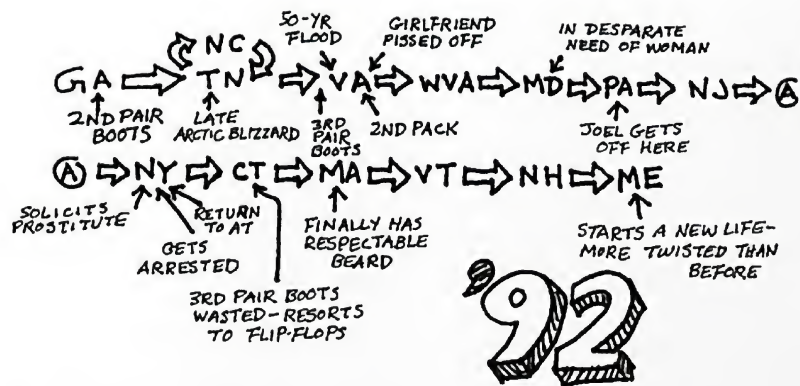


Figure 10

of which had happened yet, at the time when "Bruce on the Loose" composed this itinerary in Pennsylvania.

All along, there are geographical thresholds, important to weary thru-hikers. Passing through Harpers Ferry, headquarters for the Appalachian Trail Conference, becomes a significant moment for these hikers, especially crossing the Potomac and joining the C & O Canal Towpath for an hour or two. Other important mileposts are the Delaware Water Gap, Bear Mountain Bridge, Vermont. At the Vermont State-Line register, just across the border from Massachusetts, a hiker notes, "We are officially out of rattlesnake habitat (according to 'Wingfoot') and officially in Maple Syrup and Ben and Jerry habitat (Mixin' the 2 sounds like a marketable idea)."

Because the actual length of the trail is hard to measure, due to frequent re-routes, it has been impossible to establish a reliable halfway point. Two hikers who stayed at Rausch Gap Shelter (PA) during the summer of 1984—separated by a month—disputed the subject in the shelter register:

6-11-84 Finally—the last of the halfway points! First there was Harpers Ferry—spiritual halfway point of the AT. Then PenMar and the Mason Dixon line—cross from the South into the North. Then Pine Grove Furnace and the half-gallon club. Then Whisky Spring Road—supposed halfway point according to the 1984 Data Book. Then Center Point Knob. Then the Cumberland Valley roadwalk and US 11—my

own personally calculated halfway point. Then Duncannon—"Halfway Point of the Appalachian Trail." And now the Halfway Hilton—now I can honestly say I'm halfway from Springer to Katahdin....

Chris Burke

7-9-84 Enough of this halfway bullshit. First it was Harpers Ferry, then PenMar then some cedar tree in East Bumfuck, now it's supposedly here. We're already past the halfway mark and shouldn't have to be subjected to these continual psychological teasings insisting that we're only halfway. We've returned from the locker room, redevise our new strategy, and listened to some inspirational words from Coach Boston. On to Katahdin and best of luck to all thru hikers in the second half of their journey.

The Sleeping Cinema

As pictured in the shelter register, Pooh and Piglet arrive at Windsor Furnace, Pennsylvania, "the Halfway House" (figure 11). Piglet says, "I heard someone say there's only 1000 miles left to Mt. Kindergarten [he means Mt. Katahdin]." And Pooh replies, "That still sounds like a lot to me, Piglet, probably even more than twenty!" For twenty is about as much as the mind—or at least the body—can comprehend, especially in rock-strewn Pennsylvania.

The hike spins into a stall. It's raining. The rocks are slippery. There's nothing to do but wait it out in the shelter. But the roof leaks and the next shelter is twelve miles north, too far to reach before

dark. The register comes down out of its wooden box, the ballpoint pen or pencil, and the hiker draws a map of what matters: the pattern of holes in the shelter roof. Of what use is this map? It is the picture of what matters now, what will benefit the next party of hikers. Here's the front of the shelter; here's the back. One inch equals two feet. The

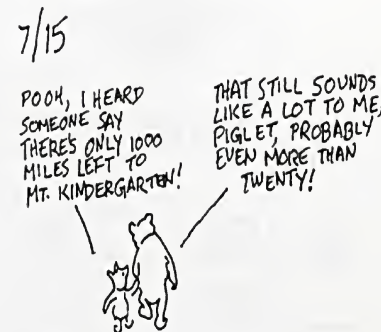


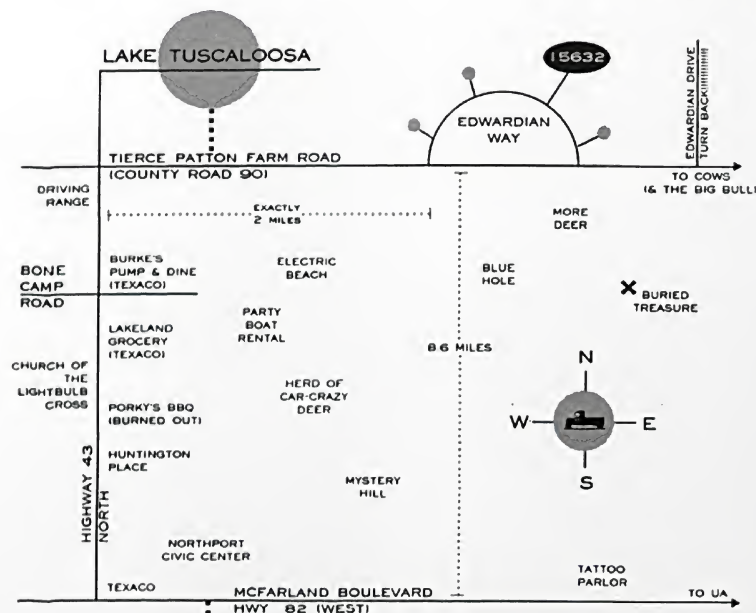
Figure 11

diameters of the leak-holes are only slightly exaggerated. The Big Five, displayed on a grid, are like stars in a constellation. The hiker connects the dots, then slides his sleeping bag to the far corner of the shelter, closes his eyes, and dreams the last ascent, to the top of Katahdin, or, perhaps, a comforting map of that climb. *I am as large as the mountain, pulling myself up its almost vertical slope.* ♦

Directions Home

Sandy Huss

82 WEST TO 43 NORTH - TURN RIGHT NORTH
ON 43 FOR 8.6 MILES TO
THE TIERCE PATTON FARM ROAD
(AKA CO RD 90) TURN RIGHT - GO EXACTLY 2
MILES TO - EDWARDIAN WAY - TURN LEFT
3RD DRIVEWAY ON LEFT - KEEP TRACK
OF YOUR ODOMETER AND
YOU'LL BE FINE



The World Book

Elaine Sexton

Here's the idea, silk worms spinning in the shade of paper parasols, on dusty streets, where my sisters actually have to dip under blossoms to see. And steel shadows, their dark rungs, glide by me, me swaddled in pink cloth rising blip blip blip up the cinematic center of a skyscraper in the City of Lights, and elsewhere waves crash under our windows, and the tower is bent, and there's rows and rows of scent. We're in so many places an encyclopedia might be tempted to look us up. Kyoto, Fort Knox, Pittsburgh, Pisa, Rye Beach, Melrose, Amsterdam, Paris, Verdun, Ipswich, Fort Devens and more. Could I get more *specific*? There where my father died, where they met, where my brother, John, was born, where I was born, where *they* lived, where we lived, where we *almost* lived, where he, my father was born where my mother was small, where for me, and for good, the whole world opened up. There, where my mother went door-to-door, but not too often. When she had to, she stopped. After all her friends & neighbors bought. Where she tried to sell *The World Book* to those she'd never met, who'd never seen what she had seen, where Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake, where pilgrims left their crutches, where soldiers raped the virgins of war, found giant conch shells to take home, where the Kings of France were crowned, that cathedral, my baptismal site, where blessed water was dripped over my head. And years, not too many years, later the hands that held me over that gothic font and lifted me past its iron grates, knocked on the blank doors of strangers at Rye Beach. And only now, today, when we look up "gingko" to see how that old herb might restore her memory in this blue bound *World Book*, under the letter "G," she says to me so I see her feet at the threshold where she stands and her eyes stay, Elaine, she says, looking back, maybe, for the first time, as if thirty years were enough to lift any ordinary shade, *those doors were so big.*

Kimi Eisele is the founding editor of *you are here*. She recently completed a master's degree in geography at The University of Arizona and is now working on a collection of essays about children on the U.S.-Mexico border. She lives in Tucson, AZ.

Duane Griffin earned his Ph.D at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is now an assistant professor of geography at Bucknell University. His research interests include biogeography and human-environment interactions, though his curiosity is virtually boundless.

Stacey Halper, a freelance photographer, resides in Santa Monica, California. She studied Fine Art Photography at the State University of New York at Purchase and has shown her work in galleries in New York, Connecticut, Tucson, and most recently in the Kodak Gallery in Seoul, Korea. Stacey is currently working on two book projects as a photo illustrator and is completing a short film entitled *Bread and Bones*, which is based on a series of still photographs that she completed in 1997.

Sandy Huss teaches writing in the MFA program at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. She is the official navigator in her household.

Ken Lamberton's "Desert Time" is part of his forthcoming book, *Fences and Razor Wire*, printed by Mercury House. Ken's work has appeared in *Green Mountain Review* and *Manoa*. More information about Ken and his writing can be found in the 1999 *Writer's Market*.

Joel Lipman, a native of the American Midwest, currently lives in Ohio and is the Associate Dean of Visual and Performing Arts at the University of Toledo. During 1992-93 he worked as a Fulbright Fellow in Belize. Joel collaborated with the poet Yasser Musa on *Machete Chemistry and Panades Physics*.

Jeri McAndrews's ballet and modern dance training came from some of New York City's most legendary teachers, including Muriel Stuart, Finis Jung and Maggie Black. She moved to Denver to establish the modern dance department at Loretto Heights College. In 1979, Jeri founded the Telluride Dance Festival. Her work has been funded by grants from the Colorado Council on the Arts, the Manitou Foundation and other non-profit organizations. To contact Jeri about upcoming dances please email her at Jmcand6661@aol.com.

Desiree A. Rios is a chicana photographer and mixed media artist. She is committed to the process of creating art rather than emphasizing solely the product. Her work explores the idea that the unchecked application of technology causes people to become alienated from daily interactive exchanges.

Roger Sheffer teaches writing in the MFA program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He was a recent finalist in the Missouri Review Editors' Prize for fiction (his work was published in May), and his third collection of fiction *Music of the Inner Lakes* will be published by New Rivers Press this fall.

Elaine Sexton is pursuing an MFA in poetry at Sarah Lawrence College. She lives in New York and works in publishing.

Jeff Stein has poems published or forthcoming in the *New Delta Review*, *Mosaic*, *Many Mountains Moving*, and the *Fort Collins Poetry in Motion* project (in cooperation with the local bus lines). He and his wife, a returned Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya, have traveled/lived/worked in Kenya, Tanzania, Costa Rica, England, Israel and South Korea.

Wisława Szymborska is the recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize for Poetry for *Poems, New and Collected, 1957-1997*.

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